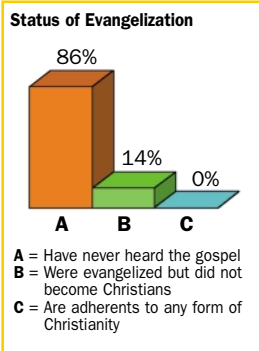




**Population in China:**  
 100,000 (1987)  
 135,600 (2000)  
 172,800 (2010)  
**Location:** Yunnan  
**Religion:** Animism  
**Christians:** None Known

## Overview of the Tai Nua

- Countries:** China
- Pronunciation:** "Tie-Nooua"
- Other Names:** Dai Nuea, Tai Nuea, Dai Kong, Chinese Shan, Tai Le, Dai Le, Tai Loe, Dai Loe, Paiyi, Loe, Han-Paiyi, Dai Lu
- Population Source:** 100,000 (1987 D. Bradley); Out of a total Dai population of 1,025,128 (1990 census)
- Location:** *Yunnan:* Along rivers in south central Yunnan, south of Dali Prefecture
- Status:** Officially included under Dai
- Language:** Daic, Tai, Southwestern Tai
- Dialects:** 0
- Religion:** Animism, Theravada Buddhism, Polytheism, Ancestor Worship
- Christians:** None known
- Scripture:** None
- Jesus film:** None
- Gospel Recordings:** None
- Christian Broadcasting:** None
- ROPAL code:** TDD00



**Location:** There is a great deal of confusion regarding the names used to classify the various Dai/Tai groups in China. Many publications call the Tai in the Dehong Prefecture *Tai Nua*, a name meaning "northern Tai." The Tai in Dehong are profiled in *Operation China* under the name *Tai Mao*, according to the classification of linguist David Bradley. "The Tai Nua or 'Northern Tai' live in southwestern Yunnan along river valleys; they number about 100,000."<sup>1</sup>



Midge Conner

**Identity:** Although the Tai Nua are part of the official Dai nationality in China, they speak their own distinct language. They should not be confused with the identically named but different Tai Nua of Laos.

**Language:** Linguists have pointed out that Tai Nua is "a name given to at least two quite different southwestern branch groups."<sup>2</sup> The Tai Nua profiled here are members of the Southwestern branch of the Tai language family, while the Tai Mao language spoken throughout Dehong Prefecture is similar to the Shan language of Myanmar. The confusion of names is caused partly by "the Chinese tendency to group languages together into nationalities, exemplified by the Dai nationality, which includes all the Southwestern Tai languages of China."<sup>3</sup>

**History:** The Tai Nua are historically part of the great Tai race of Asia, which dispersed during the past millennia to now inhabit parts of China, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, and, of course, Thailand. "Based on evidence from Neolithic finds unearthed by archeologists... during recent decades... it

is now believed that before migrating southwards, the forefathers of the present day Thais lived in most parts of Guangxi and Sichuan, plus parts of Guizhou and Yunnan."<sup>4</sup>

**Customs:** After a Tai Nua wedding ceremony the bridegroom goes to live with his bride's family. Traditionally he must take with him gifts of tea, rice, meat, bananas, four eggs, and two salted fish for his new in-laws. Upon arrival, the village elder takes the packets of tea and rice out to the road and calls on the spirits of

heaven and earth to witness the marriage. He then ties a white thread seven times around the wrist of the bride and once around the wrist of the groom to indicate their unbreakable commitment to each other."<sup>5</sup>

**Religion:** Although they are nominally Theravada Buddhists, the Tai Nua have many aspects of animism and polytheism mixed into their beliefs. The very first Tai god was Shalou, the god of Hunting. "Before a hunt, sacrifices were... offered to Shalou to avert danger and to ensure success in the hunt."<sup>6</sup>

**Christianity:** There are no known Christians among the Tai Nua and very little outreach is presently focused on bringing the gospel to them. Little improvement in their spiritual condition has taken place since the 1920s when one missionary lamented, "There is not a missionary working south of [Kunming] to Mohei.... I am here alone and my little candle is the only light. Yet in these mountains are thousands of tribesmen who have never heard of the Gospel."<sup>7</sup>